

Program Purpose

The Washington Scholars program recognizes the importance of educational excellence to the future economic and societal vitality of this state by contributing to the retention of the best and brightest of the state's high school graduates. Recipients are chosen based on academic excellence, leadership and community service contributions.

These outstanding citizens are incented to pursue higher education in Washington using the in-state scholarship offered through the program. The hope is that they will remain Washington residents and contribute through their professional and community service.

Program Highlights

- Since 1981, more than 3,000 students have received this widely known and respected scholarship.
- Recognizes three students per legislative district (147 new awards annually).
- A large majority remain in-state to return the state's investment through professional and continued community service activities.
- Scholars receive up to four academic years of scholarship and must maintain a 3.30 cumulative GPA to receive the award after the first year.
- The award is indexed to public tuition, and may be used at accredited in-state public or private colleges or universities.
- In-state private colleges match the state award

Effect of proposed cuts

The Governor and House proposed 2011-13 biennial budgets suspend the Washington Scholars Program for new recipients. The budgets fulfill commitments to previously selected recipients. The suspension would result in:

- Elimination of 147 new scholarships each year for the 2011, 2012, and possibly 2013 award years (a loss of up to three cohorts of new recipients unable to access scholarship funding).
- A reduction in direct state financial aid in the 2011-13 biennium of:
 - \$2.8 million in the Governor's proposal
 - \$2.2 million in the House budget proposal

- "Brain drain" away from the state. Program suspension increases the likelihood that these top performing students may seek education and careers outside of Washington.
- Higher reliance on student loans and other forms of financial aid, if available, in a time of limited resources.
- Possible shift in enrollment patterns to lower cost institutions due to reduced financial assistance.
- Loss of matching institutional gift aid required for Scholars attending in-state private colleges in the 2011-13 biennium of:
 - More than \$921,000 in Governor's proposal
 - More than \$1.1 million in House proposal

Please note: This brief reflects the impacts associated with the Governor's and initial House budget proposals for 2011-13. The House proposal is as offered by the Chair of the House Ways & Means committee. The final budget will not be released until the conference budget is agreed to by the Legislature.

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